

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 00177 131228Z

43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-11 EB-07 AID-05 TRSE-00 /083 W

----- 073056

R 131150Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5827

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 177

KUWAIT FOR BAGHDAD ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SY

SUBJ: SARG AMNESTIES FORMER BAATHIST LEADER SALAH AL-BITAR

1. MFA DIR AMERICAN AFFAIRS SHOUFFI TOLD EMBOFF
JAN 10 THAT PRES ASAD HAD DECIDED FEW DAYS
PREVIOUSLY TO ISSUE AMNESTY FOR CO-FOUNDER OF
BAATH PARTY SALAH AL-BITAR, PRESENTLY LIVING IN
EXILE. SHOUFFI ALSO REVEALED THAT FORMER PALESTINIAN
OFFICIAL MUHAMMAD AL-BASSAL (PHON.), ARRESTED
IN 1972 FOLLOWING PALESTINIAN CONFERENCE IN CAIRO,
HAD BEEN RELEASED JAN 9. FROM SARG PRISON AND WAS
NOW STAYING WITH SHOUFFI. SHOUFFI DESCRIBED BASSAL AS
PALESTINIAN "MODERATE."

2. ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION BITAR (BORN DAMASCUS
1912) AND MICHAEL AFLAQ TOGETHER FOUNDED BAATH
PARTY IN 1930'S. BITAR ULTIMATELY HELD POSITION
OF SARG PRIME MINISTER FIVE TIMES, LAST BEING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 00177 131228Z

IN JAN 1966. HE WAS OVERTHROWN FOLLOWING

MONTH BY SALAH AL-JADID. JADID REGIME DETAINED BITAR, EXCOMMUNICATED HIM FROM PARTY, AND IN AUG 1966 PERMITTED HIM TO SEEK EXILE ABROAD IN LEBANON. SLIGHTLY MORE THAN ONE YEAR LATER, BITAR ISSUED PUBLIC RENUNCIATION OF HIS TIES WITH BAATH PARTY.

3. COMMENT: SHOEFI WAS UNCERTAIN AS TO MOTIVES BEHIND SARG DECISION AMNESTY BITAR AND WHETHER IT MEANT HE MIGHT SOON BE RETURNING TO SYRIA. IT MIGHT BE PART OF SARG ATTEMPT TO REINFORCE EASTERN FRONT THROUGH GESTURE TOWARDS RECONCILIATION WITH IRAQ. ALTERNATELY, ASAD REGIME MAY FEEL SECURE ENOUGH TO PROMOTE RECONCILIATION WITH PROMINENT SYRIAN POLITICAL EXILE PATTERNED AFTER RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO WOO BACK EXILED SYRIAN BUSINESSMEN WITH THEIR FINANCIAL CAPITAL. QUITE APART FROM ANY IMPACT ON SYRI - IRAQI AFFAIRS, ASAD MAY FEEL THAT HE CAN ACQUIRE ADDED POLITICAL CAPITAL AND LEGITIMACY THROUGH BITAR'S RETURN. THEN, TOO, IT COULD BE THAT ASAD SIMPLY RESPONDING TO PETITION FROM OLD AND TIRED BAATHIST WHO WANTS TO RETURN HOME. NO PUBLICITY HAS YET BEEN GIVEN TO AMNESTY DECISION

AND IT IS TOO SOON TO ESTIMATE ITS FULL POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE.
MURPHY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMNESTY, POLITICAL PRISONERS, PARTY LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowellE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAMASC00177
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760012-0075
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760163/aaaacebz.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowellE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2004 by RowellE0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SARG AMNESTIES FORMER BAATHIST LEADER SALAH AL-BITAR
TAGS: PINT, SY, BAATH PARTY, (AL-BITAR, SALAH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006